

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THEIR NIS EXPERIENCE IN THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY

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Introduction. Government support of gifted children in Kazakhstan is based in understanding human capital as a main component of the country's further successful economic development. In 2009, the government of Kazakhstan launched a project of intellectual schools, a policy which has the aim to accelerate the development of education system and in turn, the country. Since 2010, graduates of NIS have been entering higher education institutions in Kazakhstan and abroad. It is thus interesting to examine how the students undergo their transition from secondary school to post-secondary education and how well they are prepared to study at the university of international standard.

Materials and methods. Explanatory sequential mixed methods research design was used. For qualitative part, 10 students were selected for two focus group interviews. For quantitative part, I collected the data from 74 students of Nazarbayev University. As for methods, a survey questionnaire and interview were used.

Results and discussion. Results indicate that NIS graduates value greatly the knowledge and skills that they received at school and highly rate their preparedness for academic rigors at the university. However, findings also indicate that there are some areas that need improvement, such as, more effective strategies in grouping students according to their level of English and improvement of English writing skills, as well as more effective preparation in terms of time management, ICT and critical thinking skills is needed. According to the NIS graduates' perceptions, the NIS need also to develop in their students dispositions as the sense of patriotism, sense of duty, the sense of responsibility and the sense of constant self-improvement, because, as they perceived, these qualities and dispositions are even more important than knowledge of subjects or other generic skills, for the benefit of the students themselves but also for the benefit of the state.

Conclusions. This study contributes to the understanding of gifted children education in Kazakhstan by providing information on how NIS graduates assess their school experience in terms of preparation for university. This study enabled the graduates of NIS, participating in this study to express their views and concerns. The results provide the information for discussion, debates on effectiveness of NIS in preparedness to university and may help to draw conclusions to improve the further implementation of the NIS project. Findings of the research have implications for the teachers and administrators of NIS, university administrators and policy- analysts.

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